



STATE OF WASHINGTON

STATE BUILDING CODE COUNCIL

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RE: Washington State Building Codes Review and Adoption Process

All meetings described in the following process are posted on the SBCC web site and announced through GovDelivery and are open to the public. The agendas and summary minutes are posted on the SBCC web site.

The adoption period of new model codes begins with the availability of the new editions every three years and ends with formal adoption of the building codes as amended by the State Building Code Council (SBCC). For review, the codes are broken into two groups. Group 1 includes the International Building Code (Nonstructural provisions), International Fire Code, and Washington State Energy Code-Commercial. Group 2 includes the International Building Code (Structural Provisions), International Existing Building Code, International Residential Code, International Mechanical Code, Wildland-Urban Interface Code, International Fuel Gas Code, Uniform Plumbing Code, and the Washington State Energy Code-Residential. Group 1 codes are evaluated in the first year of review, Group 2 codes in the second year.

New model codes are compared against the previous edition by a Technical Advisory Group (TAG) appointed for a specific code. The TAGs are comprised of a Council member as chair along with appointed volunteers from stakeholder groups. The TAG also compares the existing code amendments with the new model code edition. The new editions often incorporate the Washington State amendments to previous versions. The TAG makes recommendations addressing which State amendments should be eliminated because the new edition substantively addresses them to a standing committee made up of Council members. The standing committee then either accepts the TAG recommendations or modifies them before making recommendations to the full Council. The Council then votes on which amendments will be eliminated, then formally requests anyone who has an interest, to submit code change proposals to the model code and amendments being carried forward. At the close of the submittal window, the Council reviews the statewide code change proposals received for completeness and then forwards them to the applicable TAG. The TAG then reviews each proposal, determining whether they will recommend support of the proposal, recommend modifying the proposal, or recommend disapproval of the proposal to the appropriate Council standing committee.

The standing committees are the Building, Fire and Plumbing (BFP) and Mechanical, Ventilation and Energy (MVE) Codes Committees. These committees are made up of only Council Members. The Committees take the recommendations of the TAGs, and through another round of public comments, decide by majority vote whether to recommend approval, disapproval, or modification of the proposed statewide amendments to the full SBCC. The SBCC makes the final determination which proposal to be included in the rulemaking. Proposals included in the rulemaking are filed with the State Code Reviser and published in the Washington State Register. This filing includes a summary of the proposed rules, the complete text of the proposed changes, due dates for public comments, dates and locations for public hearings, and any economic impact statements required by law. The comment period and public hearings is the fourth opportunity for stakeholders and members of the public to voice their concerns or to support proposed amendments. (The first is the TAG review, the second is the Standing Committee review, and

the third is at the Council meeting where the decision which proposed amendment is moving forward is made.) Proposals that are disapproved are dismissed and not considered further. Occasionally, the Council may refer a proposal back to the TAG for additional modifications. When that happens, generally the original recommendation, if it was not for disapproval, will be filed and the further TAG work will be taken as public testimony. If the proposal was recommended for disapproval, the Council has the choice to either file the original proposal as submitted and consider further TAG work as testimony, or delay the process to consider further TAG recommendations at the next meeting. This could either be through a special council meeting or at the next regularly scheduled meeting.

There is a written public comment period and public hearings, typically held in September and/or October in both Eastern and Western Washington. After the public hearings, the Council holds a work session to review testimony and receive clarification on any issue they feel is necessary. There is often limited public comment and clarification on controversial issues at these work sessions; it is up to the discretion of the Council Chair.

The Council must make the final decision on adoption by December 1 for all codes, except the Washington State Energy Code-Commercial. The Washington State Energy Code-Commercial, must be adopted by December 15. All state amendments to the codes must receive a majority of eight votes of the Council to be adopted. Amendments to the Washington State Energy Code-Commercial, require a two-thirds majority vote or they will require legislative action for adoption. The amendments cannot take effect before the end of the regular legislative session in the next year. Typically, the Council uses July 1 as effective date for new codes.